

חג כשר ושמח

Happy Passover

JewsforJudaism.ca

KEEPING JEWS JEWISH



**The Last Seder
in the Warsaw Ghetto**

Photo: Yad Vashem Archives

THE CRUCIFIXION PSALM



Know How to Respond

by Rabbi Michael Skobac

Christian missionaries have always had a problem. The central tenet of their faith is that Jesus of Nazareth was the Jewish Messiah. The problem, of course, is glaring. Jesus failed to fulfill any of the Biblical criteria of the Messiah.

First, the Messiah is supposed to reign as the King of Israel. Jesus was never anointed king and never reigned as king. Second, the prophets foretold that during the reign of the Messiah, the Jewish people would live at peace in their ancestral homeland, our Holy Temple would be functioning, the entire world would embrace the G-d of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and there would be universal peace. Clearly, Jesus failed here as well.

This drove Christian apologists first to redefine the concept of Messiah and then to try to show how the Bible substantiates this novel view.

They adopted a “turn lemons into lemonade” approach when it came to Jesus dying without fulfilling any of the Biblical Messianic prophesies. They began to claim that according to the Bible, the Messiah was supposed to be crucified to serve as a sacrifice that would atone for the sins of those who believed in him.

One of the Biblical texts they marshalled for this was Psalm 22, verse 17 (verse 16 in a Christian Bible). The verse reads, “For dogs have surrounded me, a pack of evildoers has enclosed me,

like a lion at my hands and feet.” This is the actual translation, but Christian Bibles mistranslate the Hebrew word ka’ari (like a lion) as “they pierced.”

It is easy to prove this is a mistranslation: every other time the word ka’ari appears in the Bible (for example, Numbers 24:9, Isaiah 38:13), Christian translators render it properly as “like a lion.”

Aside from the problem of this blatant mistranslation, it’s important to realize that the context of Psalm 22 is not about the Messiah — it is about the persecution of David. In this Psalm, King David portrays his enemies as wild animals attacking him. This is not unique to our verse. In verses 13–14 he writes, “Many bulls surround me, Bashan’s mighty ones encircle me. They open their mouths against me like a tearing, roaring lion.”

The gospels of the Christian Bible cite many verses from the Hebrew scriptures to support their belief that Jesus was the Messiah — but even they never reference Psalm 22.

Finally, even if this Psalm were about the Messiah, and even if we allow for the Christian mistranslation of verse 17 — it would still not prove that Jesus was the Messiah, for Jesus was not the only person whose hands and feet were pierced. During their occupation of Judaea, the Romans crucified over 100,000 Jews. ■

**Jesus failed
to fulfill any
of the
Biblical
criteria of
the Messiah.**



**The 14th Annual
Spring Lecture Series**

**Jewish Wisdom
for Living**

with Rabbi Michael Skobac

May 14

Judaism and Islam: Understanding the Interface

May 21

Loneliness: A Dire Crisis of the 21st Century

May 28

G-d's 13 Attributes of Mercy: An Analysis

June 04

The Mysterious Upside-down Letter Nun in the Torah

June 18

Fear of Heaven: A Jewish Perspective

June 25

Living a More Spiritual Life: Five Easy Steps

Registration Required. Go to:
www.jewsforjudaism.ca/spring24
Above 6 Tuesdays • 8 PM
Attend LIVE or ZOOM
Shaarei Tefillah Cong.
3600 Bathurst St.
Toronto • No Charge



Bringing Jews Back Home to Judaism

An interview with Jews for Judaism's Rabbi Michael Skobac

By Jodie Shupac – Canadian Jewish News

How did Jews for Judaism come about?

Jews for Judaism's mandate is two-fold: educational programming to help our community become aware of the efforts of hundreds of Christian groups to convert Jews and to arm Jews with effective answers to missionary claims. And secondly, counselling for individuals and families affected by the problem. We use a medical model, investing in both preventative education and critical care.

But over the years, we realized that Jews for Jesus aren't really the problem — they're a symptom of the problem. The real concern is the growing number of Jews who feel no meaningful connection to Judaism. Some who feel disconnected are vulnerable to Christian evangelism, while other Jews might become involved in Buddhism, Hinduism, New Age religions and cults. While the ambient religion in North America is Christianity, we've seen many Jews drawn to eastern religions.

So, what is Jews for Jesus all about?

They are the largest Christian organization seeking to convert Jews, with offices worldwide. Many people use the term "Jews for Jesus" generically to describe any Jews who believe in Jesus. Today they're also called "Messianic Jews." Historically, some elements of the Church were bothered by the question of "Why



don't Jews accept Christianity?" Jesus was supposed to be the Jewish messiah, and it irks many Christians that Jews didn't tune into that. They came to realize that Jews are resistant to converting to another religion and giving up their Jewish identity. Groups like Jews for Jesus attempt to overcome this impediment by blending Jewish practices with Christian beliefs and creating the impression that one can be a good Jew and still believe in Jesus.

Jews for Judaism is tracking over 1,000 Christian groups that work to convert Jews. In Israel there are 300 such groups, in Canada 150 and in the U.S.A, over 750.

Our real concern is the growing number of Jews who feel no connection to Judaism.

How do missionaries make Jews comfortable about accepting Jesus and becoming a Christian?

This "Messianic Jewish" movement started in the 1970s. Protestant evangelicals, wondering why they were so unsuccessful at converting Jews, realized that Jews associated Christianity with those behind the Crusades, the Inquisition and the Holocaust. So, missionaries now try to convey the impression that "real Christians love Jews; we support Israel." They also saw that Jews didn't want to convert because they didn't want to give up Judaism. So they started working the angle: "If you accept Jesus as your Messiah, you'll become a fulfilled Jew, a completed Jew



... a Messianic Jew. You can still have Shabbat, Jewish holidays, wear a *tallit* and a yarmulke — and believe in the Jewish Messiah.” These groups aren’t converting highly educated and committed Jews. They’re converting assimilated Jews who aren’t involved in Judaism. Some of these converts would then report, “I’m more Jewish now than ever. Now I keep kosher, I observe Shabbat and celebrate the Biblical holidays.”

These missionaries are saying, “It’s Jewish to believe in Jesus.” Well, that’s just wrong. Much of Christianity is antithetical to Judaism. Jews know they are not walking into a traditional synagogue when they enter a “Messianic Synagogue” (Hebrew-Christian church). But the Messianic missionary groups make Christianity more palatable to Jews and ease the discomfort Jews would normally feel in converting. They use euphemistic language meant to be less abrasive to Jewish ears, like calling the New Testament *Brit Hachadashah*, referring to Jesus as Yeshua HaMashiach, and calling baptism *mikvah*. Their “shul” may have a Torah scroll; they’ll recite Kiddush on the wine and *hamotzi* on challah. They claim to teach the “real meaning” behind Jewish traditions. For example, they’ll claim that the three *matzot* at the Passover Seder really represent the Christian trinity.

What are some of the educational programs Jews for Judaism uses to deter Jews from converting?

We conducted our own survey that showed 75 per cent of Jewish university students had someone attempt to convert them in recent years. We want Jews to be able to respond confidently to any missionary who challenges their Jewish identity.

We give lectures and run programs in schools, synagogues and for Jewish institutions throughout Canada. We also have a very robust presence on social media platforms such as Facebook. Our website is packed with vital information. Today, much of our educational programming is online. We have 475 videos on our YouTube channel that have more than 12 million views. Half of the videos deal with the Jewish response to the claims of Christian missionaries. It is critical for Jewish people to understand why we don’t accept Jesus as our Messiah and why the New Testament is not part of our Bible. The rest of our videos seek to present a compelling view of Judaism. We want to help Jewish people appreciate the profound wisdom and spirituality of Judaism.

We want to help Jews appreciate the profound wisdom and spirituality of Judaism.

Why the focus on spirituality?

Because so many Jews for Jesus converts will tell you, “I went to Hebrew school, had a bar or bat mitzvah, celebrated the Jewish holidays, but I never experienced any of it as spiritual.” Judaism was, for so many of them, a culture, a tradition, a heritage, an identity — but not a rich spiritual path that could lead to personal transformation. Jews for Jesus will tell you they now have a personal relationship with G-d. So, Jews for Judaism aims to fill that gap. The very first video we put out was about Jewish meditation. I looked at what attracts many Jews to other religions and found that, ironically, much of what they seek already exists in Judaism. We want Jews to appreciate that their own faith is a very rich, spiritual path. That’s why we named our organization Jews for Judaism and not something like “Jews against Jesus.” Our message to at-risk Jewish people is, “You don’t need to look elsewhere — what you are seeking is already in your own backyard!” ■
This article was edited for style, clarity and brevity.

LOSING MY RELIGION

Navigating Today's Obstacles to Faith

with Rabbi Michael Skobac

We live in a time of serious challenges to Emuna (faith). This 5-part recorded video lectures series explores problem areas surrounding religion, faith and possible ways forward. During a live Q&A session after Rabbi Skobac answers all questions.

May 16 – Why Are Many Jews Abandoning Their Heritage?

May 23 – Is Belief In A Creator of the World Reasonable?

May 30 – The Bible's Compelling Case for Faith in G-d

Jun 06 – Dealing with Difficulties and Challenges to Faith

Jun 20 – What To Do If Your Adult Child Rejects Judaism

Five Thurs (dates above) • 8 PM ET • ZOOM attendance only

Registration is required: To register: jewsforjudaism.ca/losing

Admission Free • 416-789-0020 • info@jewsforjudaism.ca

מרכז שומרי
השומר
SHAAREI SHOMAYIM
ADULT EDUCATION

jewsforjudaism.ca
KEEPING JEWS JEWISH



How to ANSWER A CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY STEP-BY-STEP BIBLICAL REFUTATIONS

with Rabbi Michael Skobac

- E-Book
- Audio Recording
- 2-Part Video
- Condensed Anti-Missionary Study Guide

To access the above free items go to
jewsforjudaism.ca/how-to-answer/

Each year 1,000 Christian missionary groups spend \$300 million world-wide to target Jews for conversion to Christianity. Sadly, many Jews aren't prepared to respond to the missionaries' claims. In response, Jews for Judaism is offering Rabbi Michael Skobac's classic *"How to Answer a Christian Missionary"* preventive educational lecture in four formats below.

 **UJA FEDERATION**
of Greater Toronto

jewsforjudaism.ca
KEEPING JEWS JEWISH

Summer Mini-Lectures

with Rabbi Michael Skobac



Three Mini-Lectures each evening!

JULY 11

- **Is Judaism All or Nothing?**
- **Becoming a Master of Time**
- **A Jewish Perspective on Pets**

JULY 25

- **Meet Yourself: *Judaism on Cloning***
- **Did Jacob Worship a Symbol of the Cross?**
- **What the Angel Teaches Us in the Womb**

Thurs., July 11 and 25, 2024 • 8:00 PM ET • No Charge
Attend LIVE or ZOOM • Registration Required for Login ID
Shaarei Shomayim Congregation, 470 Glencairn, Rear Door
Please register at: jewsforjudaism.ca/summerminis24
For more info: T 416-789-0020 • info@jewsforjudaism.ca



Help Save Jewish Lives

Support Jews for Judaism

Jews for Judaism is a global leader in Jewish outreach. We are at the forefront of addressing the most difficult and sensitive issues threatening Jewish survival.

Our goals are to strengthen Jewish pride and identity and to win back those Jews who have been negatively influenced or coerced by missionaries, cults, eastern religions, the growing rate of Jewish apathy and ignorance, assimilation, intermarriage, anti-Israel BDS propaganda, antisemitism and other challenges to Jewish continuity that are devastating the Jewish community worldwide.

We achieve our goals through local programming and via worldwide Internet Jewish outreach. Last year, over two million people accessed our social media platforms. Thousands of Jews are helped by our YouTube video lectures, specialized intervention, one-on-one counselling, education programs, downloadable literature and audio materials, and Shabbat and Jewish Holiday home hospitality.

Jews for Judaism unites the Jewish community in a common cause. We have earned endorsements from a wide spectrum of Jewish agencies, rabbis and educators. We connect countless Jewish people to the spiritual depth, beauty and wisdom of Judaism. Please support Jews for Judaism. You can help keep Jews Jewish and save Jewish lives by giving now at www.jewsforjudaism.ca/donate/. Thank you. ■

JewsforJudaism.ca
KEEPING JEWS JEWISH

3110 Bathurst Street, P.O. Box 54042
Toronto, Ontario CANADA M6A 3B7
416-789-0020 • info@jewsforjudaism.ca
To Donate: jewsforjudaism.ca/donate/

